

# Robert Lewis Dabney, Southern Conservative

By FRANCIS B. SIMKINS

**B**EFORE 1861 the mind of the South passed through two stages. The thinkers of the region inherited from the Revolutionary generation a philosophy in which common sense, deism, and a disciplined heroism dominated over the God of the burning bush. Religious freedom became an actuality for everyone except the Quakers, who put love of peace above patriotism. Slavery was denounced by important gentlemen as inhuman or as demoralizing to white youth.

After the 1820's conditions changed. The "old-time religion" took possession of the people so thoroughly that a historian declares, "The Southern people reached the eve of the Civil War one of the few religious people left in the Western World." The region below the Potomac became a throwback to the orthodoxy of the seventeenth century. This turning back to orthodoxy was inevitable. There was a practical need of defending slavery by appeals to the Bible against those who had learned to combine eighteenth century egalitarianism with nineteenth century humanitarianism. Irreligion now was to be tolerated only among Southerners too dissolute or too ignorant to read the Bible or to dress decently. The educated and the respectable demanded a leadership that would proclaim eternal verities as old as Aristotle, St. Paul, and John Calvin. The mind of the South was captured by Protestant ministers who established church colleges to rescue education from the infidelity of the Jeffersonians.

Chief among these Protestant ministers was Robert Lewis Dabney, a Virginia Presbyterian who was born in 1820. He sprang from the aristocracy of Piedmont Virginia. It was a society of homespun ladies and gentlemen who lived in modest homes, were uncorrupted by wealth, emphasized kinship and the laws of hospitality, took intelligent care of their slaves, stressed Presbyterianism and classical education, and ruled their communities through an aristocratic type of representative government.

Dabney inherited from his father the belief that the secret ballot was fit only for cowards, that universal suffrage was a curse, and that the Virginia oligarchies of county courts created the best government devised by man. The son acquired and never lost a keen sense of social hierarchy. At the same time he learned from his father to be frugal in the management of plantation and people and to labor with his own hand if the need arose. When adversity struck, he knew how to break stones and to plant corn. That he developed into more than a country squire was not because he repudiated the customs and outlook of his people, but because he supplemented this inheritance by the unrelenting exercise of a gifted mind and of an iron will.

Dabney's education began in an old-field school where instruction in good manners, Bible, Latin, Greek, and mathematics was stimulated by a generous use of birch. He entered Hampden-Sydney, the Presbyterian college in Virginia, in 1836. In full knowledge of his superior gifts, the youth was disappointed in his professors. "We have no better teachers," he wrote his mother, "than we have at home." The youth spent much of his time acquiring social polish by visiting the genteel ladies of the college community.

The intellectual atmosphere of Hampden-Sydney did not satisfy him. So he left for the University of Virginia, believing as did other people of Virginia that it was the best institution of learning imaginable. But this critical young man soon discovered that the reality did not come up to the dream. In a series of half-humorous and half-bitter letters he expressed his disappointment. Dabney's criticism of the place was devastating. "It is quite a pretty place," he wrote,

"but I do not think it is quite as pretty as Mr. Jefferson used to think it. . . . They have a library of 16,000 volumes, and a collection of some thousands of paintings and engravings, but the books, except those which relate to law and medicine, are mostly written in French and German, and the paintings have no room to be put into, so they do not do anybody much good."

He ridiculed the provincial superstition that foreign teachers were better than native Virginians. He described two professors as "'English cockneys' with manners more unsuited to my taste than the manners of Yankees." The university community believed, he said, that Professor James J. Sylvester, who was to win fame as a mathematician, "must be a wonder in every respect" because he was recommended

by "titled lords and bishops." But Sylvester turned out to be, the student caustically adds, "a little, bluff, beef-fed English cockney, perfectly insignificant in his appearance, and raw and awkward in his manners." Dabney knew talent when he saw it. He said that William B. Rogers, the Virginia professor who later founded the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was "an accurate scholar" who would be considered just as great as any Englishmen "if we would divest ourselves of the foolish admiration of that which comes from afar." He admired a certain Professor Powers because Powers was "a good Baptist." "I don't regret at all," the young man added, "that he is not a Presbyterian."

The opinion that there is only a difference of degree between a Southern gentleman and a border ruffian is sustained by Dabney's observations on the behavior of the students of the University of Virginia. He notes that they received Professor Sylvester with illuminated tar barrels, yells, and other demonstrations of respect, but if the professor learned how much this behavior was caused by the students' love of frolic he would not congratulate himself. Sylvester did not know that the students would "stone his house if he crossed their sovereign will which he would have to do very soon if he did his duty."

"These are the chaps," Dabney said caustically of the students, "who spend their \$1,500 or \$2,000 a year, and learn about three cents worth of useful learning and enough rascality to ruin them forever." They sowed wild oats so profligately, he added, "that their tenfold crop of seed will keep them sowing all their lives." He told of cases of cheating on examinations which run counter to the inherited beliefs of Virginians concerning the honor system of their university. According to Dabney, the students' most innocent social diversion was flirting with "some old standing belles, who bloom with all the perseverence of an evergreen." He did not approve of the way the university ladies dressed, especially the wife of one of the professors who went about on a cold October day "in salmon slippers, pink merino, crimson velvet bonnet, and *blonde* veil."

He was scornfully amused at the clothes of some of the students; they wore,

"prunella bootees, then straw-colored pantaloons, striped pink and blue silk vest, with a white or straw-colored ground, crimson merino cravat, with yellow spots on it, . . . and white kid gloves (not always

of the cleanest), coat of the finest cloth, and most dandified cut, and cloth cap, trimmed with rich fur.

Mr. Jefferson's desire, Dabney said, to treat the students as self-governing gentlemen led to such riotous conduct that the Board of Visitors ordered a course of rigid discipline. The sequel of this command was an event that filled young Dabney with horror. It was the murder of Professor A. G. Davis, the chairman of the faculty, who tried to reckon with students who were firing blank cartridges against the professor's house in resentment against the new discipline. One masked student supplemented his powder with a ball and delivered a fatal shot at Professor Davis. Dabney helped bring about the arrest of the guilty person and poured his contempt upon the attempt of the lawyers for the defense to adopt the maxim: "The more palpable the guilt, the greater the honor of clearing the guilty."

Young Dabney was fair enough to the University of Virginia to admit that he got what he came there for. He was able to learn much in the natural sciences and the classics, and was able to try his latent talents for literary expression in the school magazine, and found older people with whom he could discuss the problems of slavery, soil conservation, and the "joyless and fruitless" issues of politics. In later life he gave the university credit for being largely responsible for "any special intellectual growth and vigor" he possessed.

After graduation from the University of Virginia, Dabney returned to Hampden-Sydney to study for the ministry at the Union Theological Seminary, which was on the college campus. As at the university, this fastidious intellectual found much to criticize in his new environment. The worst fact about the seminary, in his opinion, was the quality of the students. Most of them, he said, were "good creatures, very kind and quiet and uninteresting." Some of them were sons of mechanics supported by charity or by school teaching. At first he was filled with "a feeling of repulsion" at the social standing of men who later in life were supposed to be received by the best society and to give tone and manners to their communities. But, on second thought, he was consoled by the hope that the humble-born ministerial students would find their level, either learn the air and deportment of gentlemen or secure proper places as ministers for plain people.

As earlier in his academic career, Dabney associated with the ladies of Hampden-Sydney community. He found many of them to be sprightly and entertaining. He added to the joys of one of them, a pipe

smoker, by securing for her from his father's farm some "particularly delicate tobacco."

He experienced difficulties in doing his practice preaching. The congregations near Hampden-Sydney, he said, regarded the discourses of the seminarians "as a sort of imitation of the reality" and often misbehaved in church. "We have hereabouts," the novice wrote his mother, "the most ill-behaved, gospel-hardened and God-despising congregations I ever saw." During prayer there was "a constant whispering and shuffling" and even escapes into the open air.

Robert Lewis Dabney led his class at Union Theological Seminary, and after presenting a Latin thesis before the West Hanover Presbytery, was licensed to preach in 1846. He began his pastoral career among the Scotch-Irish of the Valley of Virginia. These people, he said with his characteristic tendency to be critical, "are the most inflexible people in the world when they are right, and the most vexatiously pig-headed and mullish when wrong." They were inclined to cheat ministers. "They all take it for granted," he said, "that a preacher must be gullible about the affairs of 'filthy lucre.'"

But he proved to be the master of the situation. He preached what he considered the unadulterated gospel, tactfully stayed out of congregational disputes, and proved to the skeptical that he was as practical in worldly affairs as the most realistic farmer. He developed a productive farm, kept two horses, two cows, two Negro servants, and "lived well and happy as a king and entertained much company on an annual salary of six hundred dollars." His reward was a professorship at the Union Theological Seminary at the age of thirty-six.

He was well equipped for his new position. Some thought him too severe in his judgments. But his friends said that he possessed a Pauline hatred of falsehood and injustice and, like the prophet Elijah, was rugged in thought and at times sublime. He overwhelmed heresy with a mixture of intellectual profundity and old-fashioned Christian faith. He was the Virginia gentleman *par excellence*, who did not let righteousness interfere with exquisite manners in the presence of ladies. In personal appearance he was as dignified if not as serene and handsome as Robert E. Lee. Dabney was hospitable to a fault, not knowing how to remedy this weakness in a common sense manner. He met this problem by giving up his house and refugeeing with his family in a boarding house.

Dabney was certain that the infidel Abolitionists could be destroyed

by an appeal to the Bible that would cause the Christian North to desert them. But he felt that if the slaveholders were going to use arguments from the Bible to overwhelm the Abolitionists, they must grant to the slaves the rights of civilized and immortal beings. The chastity of slave women must not be violated and slave husbands and wives must not be separated.

Dabney took the conventional Virginia view of secession and war. He opposed the destruction of the Union until its preservation came into conflict with his loyalty to Virginia. "As for South Carolina, the little impudent vixen has gone beyond all patience. She is as a great a pest as the Abolitionists," he wrote shortly after that state seceded. But when Lincoln planned the invasion of Virginia, Dabney demanded forceful defense.

Dabney believed that the Lord God of Battles would not let a cause as just as that of the South fail. He set to work to make that cause as just as possible. He became a chaplain and was raised to the height of spiritual exaltation as he stood on tented fields to hear the soldiers of the Confederacy sing hymns and bow their heads as he implored Jehovah "to bless our bleeding country and to crown our arms with success." "Our enemies will soon find out," he predicted, "that the love of home and household . . . will make every one of our men a lion on the day of battle."

The war for Southern independence was scarcely a year old before the Reverend Mr. Dabney felt the urge to enter the fighting forces. Stonewall Jackson, who loved to hear preaching just a little less than he loved fighting, asked Dabney to be his chief-of-staff, provided the new officer would confine his preaching to Sundays. Dabney accepted the offer and rode with Jackson in the famous Valley Campaigns of 1862.

But he did not prove as adaptable to physical fighting as he was to forensic encounter. On one of the rapid marches for which Jackson was famous, Dabney appeared dressed in the habiliments of a Presbyterian minister: a Prince Albert coat, a high beaver hat, and a large umbrella. The soldiers subjected him to rough humor. They yelled:

"Come out from under that umbrella! Come out! I know you are under there; and I see your feet a-shaking- 'Fraid you are going to get your bee-gum spoiled? 'Fraid you will get wet?"

Jackson saw what was happening and cried out, "Gentlemen, let

us ride!" Then the general dashed off into the woods followed by Dabney and the other members of his staff. The reverend doctor's umbrella was torn to shreds by the branches and briars, and his noble beaver was knocked into a hopeless shape.

Dabney spoke critically of the characteristic which gave his commander title to military genius. "Jackson's great fault," he wrote his wife, "is that he marches and works his men with such disregard of their physical endurance."

Dabney became ill and was forced to resign after three months in the army. But his services were appreciated. "I am thankful to God," Jackson wrote him, "for permitting me to have the privilege of being blessed with your Christian and military labors as long as he did." These were more likely the words of a minister-loving Christian than those of the critical soldier.

Dabney now took up labors more congenial to his habits and physical strength. He made propaganda for the Confederacy. He wrote a life of Stonewall Jackson in which he repudiated his former criticisms of his commander. He also wrote "to rebut the slanders of the Yankee against our institutions" a book called *A Defense of Virginia and the South* for publication in London. But Confederate commissioners in England found his argument too forthright for British consumption. Dabney thought this veto "a most mistaken policy." He declared it "a confession of guilt" and caused by an unwillingness "to meet the Abolitionist charge squarely."

He grieved mightily when he heard of Confederate losses in battle and of outrages committed by the invaders of Virginia. "I feel," he wrote relatives of fallen warriors, "there is a sense in which they died for me, and in my stead, and for my defense and that of my home and little ones." When the Southern people's will to resist began to decline, Dabney prescribed what he thought was the best cure. "The only remedy," he said, "is to give the people *just vengeance*. They must be permitted and encouraged to react against their aggressors, with an active resistance as fiery and intense as their wrongs are aggravated."

Dabney loved the activities, habits, and modes of thought of the slave regime and faced its overthrow with a gloom that was almost maddening. The defeat at Appomattox, he sweepingly said, had resulted "in the conquest and ruin of the land and the overthrow of

all our civil rights." "The crime of murder," he added, had been committed "against our noble commonwealth."

Universal manhood suffrage was to him "the loathsome insult of placing the Negro's feet on our necks." "We are threatened with evils," he gloomily added, "in comparison with which the horrors of the late war were tender mercies." And he was deeply hurt by the fact that the Negroes were no longer loyal to the Southern whites. "These ebony pets of the romantic philosophy" of Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, he bitterly commented, were "lending themselves in compact body . . . to be the scorpion—nay rather the reptile lash in the hands of our ruthless tyrants."

He was gratified that the officer before whom he took the oath of allegiance to the United States "did not bind me to say the principles on which I had acted were erroneous." So he continued to speak and write as he had done before. In the preface to the post-bellum edition of his life of Stonewall Jackson he warned the reader that the book had "a certain polemic tone" and that he wanted it to be known that the defeat had not caused him to change his mind. To suppress these facts, he declared, would be "rather foolish scrupulosity than sound wisdom."

Dabney, like the other white leaders, wished the blacks to remain in the white churches; but he, unlike some of his clerical colleagues, would make no concessions to keep them there. Specifically he opposed as evidence of "the moral malaria of the times" the "morbid craving" of some leaders to ordain Negroes as ministers of the Presbyterian Church. He condemned the Negroes for deserting the churches of their fathers and for gravitating "towards a religious faction which is a deadly and determined enemy of all that we hold dear." He felt that the free Negro like the slave should not be denied access to the throne of God through the church, but he did not believe that the universality of the gospel to all believers carried over into the realm of church office. "God," he said, "has often restrained the latter on grounds of class or natural distinction."

This restraint, in the case of the Negro, he believed, was not born of the circumstances of the time but was a permanent imposition because of "the natural idiosyncrasy" of the Negro race. He doubted that a single Negro ever will be found who will "come fully up to the high standards of learning, manners, sanctity, prudence, and moral weight" necessary to be a minister of the Presbyterian Church.



The conservative white leaders of Virginia worked out with the Radical administration of President Grant a compromise by which the suffrage was given to the Negroes and at the same time restored to the whites. By this device Virginia escaped most of the humiliations of Negro and carpetbag rule.

Mr. Dabney would not accept the compromise. Submission to Yankee rule, he said, was less tolerable than the "universal annihilation" which would result from Negro suffrage. "I fear," he commented, "there is nothing to which they [the Virginia political leaders] will not ultimately submit until we become as many-colored and as mean as the Mexicans." It would have been better, he said, for Virginia to remain Military District No. I. And when this honest soul detected Machiavelian hope on the faces of the politicians he became more disgusted. Dabney knew the politicians were deceiving the Yankees; that they were not going to keep the promise of Negro suffrage. He saw the civic virtues of the South corrupted by a type of indirection heretofore believed to be practiced only by Yankees.

As the clouds of Reconstruction became heavier he could not join Robert E. Lee and other ex-Confederates in seeing gleams of light through the clouds. "The day is pleasant and the sun is shining cheerfully," he wrote in the winter of 1868, "but to me everything looks as gloomy as if it were clothed in the pall of death." The neighbors who had told him in 1865 that he looked too much on the dark side of things, were now "like rats, trying to run away from the sinking ship."

"The sinking ship" was Virginia settling under the waters of Negroism and Yankeeism. The Yankees, he felt, had killed what made the South worthwhile. They had murdered, banished or fettered the ruling class. He would emigrate to a distant clime.

He confessed that it was "a little queer" that a man who had in the past turned down "the most brilliant allurements" of positions outside the South, was planning to leave Virginia. "The only way to save Virginia," he said, "was to take Virginia out of Virginia." Life under the "mean, cruel despotism of the Yankees" would create a people of "lax principles and degraded aims." He would let the Yankees keep "the blighted soil and the miserable free Negroes" of Virginia.

To accomplish his purpose, the would-be Moses was too practical to depend entirely on the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of smoke by day. He made careful investigations of the possibility of moving to Brazil or other countries. He rejected Brazil as a possibility, fearing

that the children of the settlers might become Brazilians, something worse than becoming Yankees. He wanted a new and under-populated country where the ex-Confederates could "absorb instead of being absorbed." If such a settlement were well begun, he hopefully believed, there would "occur a perfect *exodus* of all that remains worth saving in the South."

When General Lee set his face against all forms of emigration, Dabney replied tartly: "West Point knows mathematics and tactics, but not history, human nature, and statesmanship." Since mere material interests had led millions to emigrate to the Valley of the Mississippi, was it, he asked, Utopian to expect as many to go abroad because of both material and moral interests?

Emigration was the most impractical scheme that ever entered Dabney's head. He had the good sense to give it up in less than two years. He had a mother too old to take with him and whom he would not leave behind. He was as capable as any ex-Confederate of retrieving lost fortunes. Three months after Appomattox he was able to write of himself and his family: "We are all well, and getting on somehow on bread and milk, well enough so far as that goes." To secure ready cash he opened a girls' school in his home, and did not close it until the Union Theological Seminary was once more able to pay his salary.

The fact that the conquerors put no restraints on his tongue was an important factor in keeping Dabney home. "Now," a clerical friend wrote him, "as you fought so bravely in the first, you can fight as bravely in the second war of independence." This second war was to frustrate the spiritual conquest of the South. Soon Dabney was writing so boldly that it seemed as though, through him, "the down-trodden but unconquered South had arisen and, in the majesty of right, was giving the law to the seeming conquerors."

Slavery and secession had been the cause of the break into independent bodies of the Northern and Southern branches of the Presbyterian Church. But the removal of these causes was not followed by church reunions. A main reason why sectional reunion did not come was Robert Lewis Dabney. Because of his opposition to this movement he was stigmatized as "an old war-horse" and contrasted unfavorably with the progressive ministers and politicians who felt that schism should have died with the last gun at Appomattox.

When Northern emissaries attended the General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1870, Dabney gave vent to his

contempt for Northern Presbyterians. "The great event of the day," he wrote his wife, "had been the visitation of the Radical delegates from Philadelphia" with Henry Jackson van Dyke at their head. "They were dressed in an inch of their lives," he added. . . . Our Assembly was so stupid as to let them orate *ad libitum*." He was "sickened" when "the adroit Yankee van Dyke" seemed "to have cowed all our men" by insinuating that if the Southern church did not forgive and reunite "the whole Christian world would say that we were in sulks after being whipped into a secular war."

Quivering with rage, Dabney cried before the General Assembly:

"I hear brethren say it is time to forgive. Mr. Chairman, I do not forgive. I do not try to forgive. What! Forgive these people, who have invaded our country, burned our cities, destroyed our homes, slain our young men, and spread desolation and ruin all over the land! . . . They are amiable and peaceful, are they? And is not the gorged tiger amiable and peaceful? . . . But wait until he has digested his meal, and will he not be fierce again? They [the Northerners] have gorged themselves with everything they could take from us. . . . Why should they not be amiable and kind? Do you believe the same old tiger nature is not in them? Just wrest from them anything they have taken from us."

As the orator took his seat, a friend whispered, "Dr. Dabney, you have saved the Southern church." Some of the delegates who had spoken for reunion retracted their remarks. The majority of the General Assembly voted against reunion. Dr. van Dyke ruefully remarked, "They have stripped every leaf from the olive tree, and made a rod of it to beat us with."

Dabney opposed the establishment of a universal system of state schools. He engaged in a full-dress debate with William Henry Ruffner, the first state superintendent of public instruction in Virginia in whose hands was placed the mandate of the Radical state constitution to provide schools for all children, including Negroes.

Dabney opened the debate with Ruffner in 1876 with an article which had popular appeal. He opposed the education of Negroes at public expense. The Negro, said Dabney, did not need formal instruction to prepare him for voting because he was being stripped of that privilege. Education would make him idle and immoral and unsuited for the types of labor to which he was called. If education did succeed in lifting the Negro up, the most horrible eventuality would result: the amalgamation of the races.

This was not far enough for Dabney to go. He repudiated the basic concept of universal education. He would have the state give free education only to children capable and willing to meet the highest standards. He felt that to put all sorts of children in school was a vain attempt to make silk purses out of sows' ears. He was opposed to one concession the South has made to social equality. It was the throwing together of all classes of the same race in the same classroom. This would make it possible for the children of decent people to become the companions of the vile and thus to be corrupted. He believed that the government was incapable of giving training of a good moral character. This was because the American practice of the separation of church and state kept the Bible out of the schools, and no good morals could be taught without the Word of God.

He rejected Plato's idea of the public nursery. The son, he said on the authority of both Biblical and American practices, "inherits the fortune, the social position, the responsibility, or the ill fame of his father." The state should not attempt to usurp the parental functions "until the magistrate can feel a love for the child and be nerved by it to the self-denying care and toil equal to that of the father and the mother." Let the state take an auxiliary rather than a ruling function in education by holding an impartial shield of protection over property given for private schools and support only free instruction to competent children without means.

The students of Hampden-Sydney College in 1882 extended to Dabney an invitation to deliver an address called "The New South" after they had tried "first one and then another politician, who temporized and then refused." Dabney exclaimed bitterly to the student committee, "You wish to do me as a housekeeper does when company comes, and she has a skimpy dinner; she trots out her cold souse, not because it is much eating, but it covers a place on the naked cupboard." He consented to be the students' "cold souse" provided the president of Hampden Sydney College let him speak. He could get the president's consent only after giving him the gist of his remarks. "I, being a cantankerous, bitter old man," Dabney mused, "did not ask him whether he had made such a demand . . . of political bigwigs before allowing them to speak." As things turned out, he was given a late afternoon audience of tired persons, and when he began to speak, an important member of the college staff "rose in his place, far forward, and stalked down the aisle with an air of ostentatious protest."

Dabney's "grand and awful address," as one of his friends described it, was an attack on a lusty baby which has since grown into a giant called Southern industry, which every Southerner except a few thoughtful reactionaries loves today. The address not only ran counter to the ambitions of Southern businessmen but also to the hopes of Southern politicians, Southern common men, and many Presbyterian clergymen. It was an attack on a way for the South to get rich with the aid of Yankee inventiveness and capital. It was an attack on a phase of Calvinism: the chance of God to demonstrate faith in the defeated South by showering His riches upon it. He described the plutocratic-democracy of the North as a triumph of a brutal war and featured by the depravity of Yankee millionaires, politicians, and factory workers.

Dabney was not a primitive Christian who despised wealth, or a communist who opposed its unequal distribution. He believed in wealth as essential to national greatness and he was no enemy of industrialization in itself. But as a Christian preacher with his feet on the ground, he bade the young men of the South hew to the line between the neglect of riches from the idolatry of them. He saw signs of ambitious Southerners wanting to follow the Northern passion of making riches their ultimate goal. "I hear," said Dabney,

"our young men quote to each other the advice of the wily diplomat Gotstchacoff to the beaten French: 'Be strong.' These young men exclaim, 'Let us develop! develop! develop! Let us have, like our conquerors, great cities, great capitalists, great factories and commerce, and populations; then we shall cope with them.'

Do not make the appliance of production the all in all; to exclaim, as do many, of the factories, mines, and banks, and stock boards, and horse-powers of steam, and patent machines. These by the gods, O Israel."

Once more he stigmatized universal suffrage as "the craziest and most ruinous proposition." The history of political change both in England and America, he lamented, was guided by "the fated law of progress downward in the nature of the demagogue." "The courtiers of King Mob always prompt the politicians to advocate the extension of the suffrage." In an attack on the egotistical faith of Americans in only one form of government, he asked his audience not to forget that "other peoples have their forms of government, aristocratic or regal, and under them have had their share of domestic virtues, of patriotism, of civilization, of Christianity."

He asserted that universal suffrage did not bring the rule of the people. This was because, "under a thin veil of radical democracy," bribery rules the land and creates an oligarchy of the rich. Were not the so-called representatives of the people trading off their votes almost as openly as cargoes of corn? Wall Street, not Washington, dictated political actions. The great corporations had more employees than the government, larger incomes than commonwealths, and received the fealty of legislatures.

He saw in New York a city-state as tyrannical as any city of ancient times. It was "the great emporium" which "asserts a financial supremacy which brings the whole country to her feet. Those who vainly attempt to reject her dominion pay the penalty of empty trains and vanished revenues." How, he asked, can political independence remain where financial despotism has been established?

Dabney warned the young men of the South against the popular press as a weapon of Northern plutocracy. The great newspapers of the land, he said, were "mere joint stock companies for the making of money" by having their "vulgar stupidities of error . . . visit every table and claim every eye." "Other types of 'false literature' of the North came up, like the frogs of Egypt, into our homes, our bed chambers, our very kneading troughs." Through these agencies, he concluded, the North was "deliberately building a whole system of empire on the substitution of light for darkness and darkness for light."

Dabney was fighting on the losing side. The first round in the battle against him was won when in 1884 a pamphlet was published by a Southern theological professor who had been appointed to his position "to evince the harmony of science with the records of our faith, and to refute the objections of infidel science." The professor was James Woodrow, uncle of Woodrow Wilson; the pamphlet was called "Evolution." In it Woodrow insisted: "The Bible does not teach science; and to take its language in a scientific sense is grossly to pervert its meaning." This was the beginning of Modernism in the South, the repudiation among an ever-increasing number of educated pastors and masters of the Bible as a book of knowledge. Here was a break in the hold which the orthodox theologians had on the mind of the South.

Dabney was too well acquainted with the implications of the scientific speculations of the nineteenth century to take defeat sitting down. He warned James Woodrow not to be "dazzled by the fascination of

facts and speculation." He disposed of primary tenets of evolution by speaking of the unbridgeable gap between the mentality of man and animals and of the possibility that structural similarities between the different species of life may be caused by "divine science" rather than by the development of one specie out of another. In 1887 he published *Sensualistic Philosophy of the Nineteenth Century* in which he roundly assailed pragmatism, Darwinism, and positivism. In some passages of this book he was abusive of those with whom he did not agree. Auguste Comte's talents were explained "either by constitutional disease or by maniacal conceit. His speculations should occupy rather the place of . . . the monstrosities of mental disease than a system of philosophy."

In 1883 occurred what Dabney called "one of the strangest and saddest revolutions in my troubled life." He left Hampden-Sydney to become a professor in the University of Texas. His friends warned him of the "fearful social sacrifice of leaving old Virginia to live in a rough, boorish, heterogenous place." But Dr. Dabney was discouraged over the possibility of his future usefulness at Union Theological Seminary. He was feeling the effects of Virginia malaria, was alarmed over the cordial relations which seemed to be developing between Virginia Presbyterians and those of the North, and resented the fact that his neighbors did not take steps to prevent the village of Hampden Sydney from becoming a Negro haven. His plans for departure brought few regrets among his Hampden-Sydney associates.

Texas did not prove disappointing to Dabney. He found there friends possessed of the older Virginia ideals; he was unremitting in his teaching and pamphleteering as long as he had the strength; he was active in church organizations.

On January 6, 1898, he died. At his request his body was placed in the professor's graveyard at Hampden-Sydney beside the bodies of his three infant sons, there to await, as he believed, the resurrection morning. "He was truly a prince of Israel, a pillar of strength in the house of God," said one who had battled at his side in all the contests in which the South had been involved.